DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 245 611 HE 017 336

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TITLE The Diminishing Role of Faculty in Institutional Governance: Liberal Arts Colleges as the Negative Case. ASHE 1984 Annual Meeting Paper.
PUB DATE Mar 84
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (Chicago, IL, March 12-14, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Administration; *College Faculty; *Faculty College Relationship; Financial Problems; *Governance; Higher Education; *Liberal Arts; *Participative Decision Making; Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS *ASHE Annual Meeting

ABSTRACT

The role of faculty in institutional governance during a period of change is discussed. The focus is the adaptation of 21 liberal arts colleges to fiscal and enrollment pressures of the 1970s, based on a Carnegie Council study of a total sample of 86 liberal arts colleges. The 21 institutions are further investigated, based on site visits, examination of institutional documents, and interviews. Of the 21, 16 demonstrated a strengthened/expanded faculty role, while four showed no change in faculty governance roles and structures, and one institution showed a diminished faculty role. The faculty governance role was formalized at the 16 institutions in one or more of the following ways: the development of new, representative structures of faculty governance; the independence of faculty governance structures from the central administration; formalization of the budgetary role; formalization of the faculty role in promotion and tenure; and the initiation and formalization of faculty-board of trustees relations. The strengthened role of the faculty seemed attributable to the rapid infusion over a short time period (1965-1970) of a group of young, highly professionalized faculty. (SW)

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The Diminishing Role of Faculty in Institutional Governance: Liberal Arts Colleges as the Negative Case

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HE017336

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, March 12, 1984.

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This paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, March 12-14, 1984. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

THE DIMINISHING ROLE OF FACULTY IN INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE: LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES AS THE NEGATIVE CASE

Among the major points of consensus emerging from studies of college and university governance in the late 1970s and the early 1980s is one related to the role of faculty in institutional governance. As environmental pressure (demographic and fiscal) on higher education institutions has increased and as extra-campus agencies (e.g., state boards) become more involved in higher education, the locus of decision making seems to be increasingly forced into narrower channels and to flow forever upward into central administration and beyond, and faculty are coming to exercise decreased influence in campus decision making (Baldridge et al, 1978; Mortimer and McConnell, 1978; AAUP, 1983).

In the course of a two year study of the adaptation of 86 liberal arts colleges (institutions classified as Liberal Arts I or II in 1970 by the Carnegie Council) to the fiscal and enrollment pressures of the 1970s supported by the EXXON Education Foundation, we have found that this group of institutions constitute something of a negative case to the above generalization, that is, in the vast majority of the institutional sub-sample selected for intensive study (21 of the 86 institutions), the faculty role has been strengthened and its scope expanded in a number of ways. What do we mean when we refer to strengthened or expanded faculty influence? Rather than referring to the perceptions of individual faculty of their generalized influence in one or more decision areas, we are referring rather to certain developments that appear to signal a change in the organizational role of the collective faculty in governance. Specifically, we are focusing our attention on several related organizational changes... New faculty governance structures emerged during the decade of the 1970s that were for the first time independent of the central

administration (faculty committees that were elected rather than presidentially appointed; governance bodies chaired by faculty rather than the president or the academic dean; the establishment of faculty executive officers or executive committees of the faculty, sometimes with representation on the president's administrative cabinet). Moreover, new roles were institutionalized in the budget and promotion/tenure process as well as in direct relationships with the board of trustees, unmediated by the chief executive officer. This strengthening and/or expansion of the faculty role has been, to be sure, relative. While a few of these institutions were indeed transformed into "faculty-driven" institutions during the decade of the 70s, the majority, particularly those that are church owned or affiliated, continue to be "administratively driven." The emphasis here, then, is on the direction of change in the faculty role, and not on its absolute status in institutional decision making.

With this caveat in mind, the purpose of this paper is to (1) describe the negative case as defined by a majority of the institutional sub-sample selected for intensive study (total N=21); (2) explain the strengthened/expanded faculty role both with respect to developments at the focal majority (N=16) as well as by contrast with that minority of institution in which faculty influence was either unchanged (N=4) or was diminished (N=1); and (3) to suggest the implications (meaning) this negative case might have for our understanding of the faculty role in governance of American higher education.

Before proceeding to the results of our analysis, a word need be said concerning the sample and data sources upon which it is based.

Sampling and Data Sources

Overall, the study sample consisted of all 86 institutions that were classified as Liberal Arts I or II in 1970 by the Carnegie Council and who responded to the council's 1978 Survey of Institutional Adaptations to the

1970s (about one-eighth of the population of liberal arts colleges in 1970), tapping (1) the perceptions of presidents' and other administrators' of changes during the decade in academic programs and policies as well as student and faculty characteristics and (2) administrative perceptions of the status of the institution on those dimensions at the time of the survey in 1978. The responses of this set of 86 institutions to the 1978 Carnegie Survey were submitted to two cluster analyses: (1) a cluster analysis of institutional change profiles, 1969-1978, yielding five patterns of change in academic programs and policies, faculty and student characteristics; and (2) a cluster analysis of institutional status profiles in 1978, yielding five types of institutions in terms of academic program and policy, faculty and student characteristics. The results of the two cluster analyses were used to define a sampling matrix of 25 cells (five status types in 1978 X five patterns of change during the 1970s). After eliminating all cells where N=0 or N=1, an approximately one-half representative sample of 35 institutions stratified by cell was selected. The 21 institutions employed in this analysis represent those from among the 35 that agreed to participate and could be conveniently visited given the project's budgetary constraints. Therefore, while hardly a random sample--and indeed, strictly speaking, a convenience sub-sample of a convenience sample--this group of 21 institutions tends, we think, to be quite representative of the major types of American liberal arts colleges.

These 21 institutions were the subjects of 2-3 day site visits conducted by the investigators. The visits included the examination of institutional documents (regional accreditation team reports, faculty minutes and major committee reports, president's annual reports, faculty handbook revisions over the decade) as well as interviews with members of the central administration and at least five faculty. The data collected during these visits of

particular relevance to this analysis included changes in the size and composition of faculty, 1969-1979, changes in faculty governance structues, and perceptions of the changing scope of faculty influence in various decision areas (e.g., budget and personnel policy)--both as individuals and organized bodies. These data were subjected to a content analysis. In addition, we had available survey responses from the entire group of 86 institutions to at least eight items on the Carnegie 1978 Survey directly related to the changing role of the faculty in institutional governance and further distinguishing between the role of faculty as individuals and as organized bodies. Frequency distributions on these items were used as a cross-check on the results of the content analysis of site visit data.

FINDINGS

Among the 21 sample institutions, sixteen were impressionistically classified by the investigators as institutions where the faculty role was variously strenghtened and/or expanded in scope during the 1970s; four were classified as institutions showing no real change in faculty governance roles and structures; and only one institution showed a diminished faculty role.

Before turning to our central focus on developments at the sixteen institutions defining our negative case, we must again emphasize that our concern lies with the relative strengthtening of the faculty role over the decade of the 70s rather than its absolute strength in 1980. Thus, in absolute terms, the group of sixteen displays a remarkable diversity in their Carnegie classification, control, and absolute levels of faculty influence. Eleven of the sixteen were classified as Liberal Arts II (smaller and less selective) in 1970 by the Carnegie Council, including ten church-owned or church affiliated institutions, one independent institution, and two women's colleges. Five of

the sixteen were classified by Carnegie as Liberal Arts I in 1970, including one church affiliated and two men's colleges. Fully eleven had been reclassified by Carnegie in 1976 as comprehensive institutions, primarily as a result of enrollment growth and programmatic expansion during the decade of the 1970s. By the early 1980s, fully ten of the sixteen must still be characterized as "administratively driven"; only three actually became "faculty-driven" institutions by the early 1980s (and one of these, may have already been so by the late 1960s); and two institutions might best be characterized as achieving a balance between a strong central administration and a strong organized faculty.

While clearly differing, then, in absolute levels of faculty influence, this motley group shared a number of developments during the decade of the 1970s. In nearly all cases (N=14), these institutions entered the decade of the 1970s under the leadership of a paternalistic president who functioned autocratically, if informally. Faculty meetings were typically chaired and controlled by the president; faculty committees were typically appointed by the president; faculty leadership, to the extent it existed, tended to be lodged in a senior faculty oligarchy whose influence on the president was largely informal and based on personal relations (and, as such, might not infrequently be ignored); budget making was typically viewed as the exclusive province of the administration; promotion and tenure were handled informally (many of these institutions did not adhere to the AAUP 1940 statement and most had no faculty handbook); and faculty were kept at a distance from any direct communications with the board of trustees. During the decade of the 1970s, all but one of these institutions changed its chief executive officer at least once, moving to a less paternalistic, less autocratic, and less informal leadership mode. At the same time, the faculty governance role was formalized at these sixteen institutions in one or more of the following ways:

1. The development of new, representative structures of faculty governance--Eleven of the sixteen institutions developed representative faculty or institutional governance structures, variously labeled senates, councils, etc. In so doing, there was a democratization of faculty governance with the franchise being extended more to junior faculty from the informal workings of the senior faculty oligarchy. At the same time, the institution-wide faculty meeting tended to change its function, moving from an initiatory to a reactive body, deliberating on proposals initiated by other structures. Most of the faculty committee work was undertaken in these representative bodies rather than in committees of the full faculty meeting. In at least one institution, that new governance structure was a collective bargaining unit which constituted the first faculty governance structure in that institution's history. While such representative structures may have decreased the informal influence of individual senior faculty, they tended both to formalize faculty influence as well as extend the franchise of the collective faculty. That is, the net effect may be to diminish the influence of individuals, while at the same time strengthening the influence of the collective body.

2. The independence of faculty governance structures from the central administration--Eleven of the sixteen institutions reorganized and formalized faculty committee structure, moving from presidential appointment to faculty election of faculty and all-college committees; and two of these institutions moved from exofficio, administrative chairperson of the senate and institutional committees to an elected

faculty chairperson. In addition three institutions established the position of faculty executive officer, and two of these established a faculty executive committee.

3. Formalization of the budgetary role--Ten of the sixteen institutions established or revitalized faculty finance/budget review committees which, at the least, review the institutional budget prior to submission to the board and, in many cases, are instrumental in the budget process from the very beginning, i.e. establishing budget priorities and parameters. In addition, two institutions established department staffing committees to recommend department staffing levels and the allocation of vacant positions within the institution.
4. Formalization of the Faculty Role in Promotion and Tenure--Nine of these institutions initiated major reviews of faculty personnel policies, focusing on the role of faculty in promotion and tenure decisions. As a result, eight formalized the faculty role. In half of these eight, the role is clearly larger: Three institutions adapted the AAUP 1940 statement on academic freedom and tenure in toto as institutional policy. Those institutions without a faculty handbook, developed one; and virtually all institutions substantially revised any faculty handbooks they had to formalize both policy and the faculty role therein.
5. The Initiation and Formalization of Faculty-Board of Trustees Relations--Five of the sixteen institutions initiated faculty representation on board of trustee committees or established the practice of joint faculty-board committees in such areas as academic policy, personnel, building and grounds, etc. One institution even established a faculty slot on the board of trustees.

The trend toward a strengthened/expanded faculty role suggested in these developments at a subsample of 21 institutions appears largely corroborated by the responses of the full sample of 86 liberal arts colleges to those items in the 1978 Carnegie survey related to changes in governance and campus influence patterns during the 1970s. More than three out of five institutional president's disagreed that "the authority of the president of this institution has increased." A similar proportion (58 percent) reported that the influence of the "organized faculty" had increased--and fully four out of five reported such an increase in influence with respect specifically to preparation of the annual budget (79 percent agreed that "the faculty here have a greater role in the preparation of the annual budget.") At the same time, the Carnegie data suggest that the ascent of faculty influence has been matched by the ascent of influence of central administrators' beyond the president: a similar proportion (three out of five institutions) reported that the influence of "other administrators'" had increased during the decade of the 70s. This would appear to reflect the increasing professionalization of small college administration during the 1970s--particularly in the business and program review areas--that we observed during our site visits. It suggests that at the same time as administration of the small college is becoming increasingly professionalized in response to environmental pressure, the faculty role has nonetheless been, to varying degrees, strengthened and expanded. Increasing professionalization of administration, then, at least in our negative case, does not appear to be significantly associated with the disenfranchisement of faculty.

Sources of the Strengthened/Expanded Faculty Role in Governance

How can we account for this strengthened/expanded faculty role in the face of increasing environmental pressure on liberal arts colleges and the increasing professionalization of their central administration? In nearly

all cases, the answer lies most directly in the faculty itself, aided and abetted by a new breed of president, less autocratic and more attuned to the needs and prerogatives of faculty. In at least ten of the campuses, the faculty provided the major stimulus for a change. In six cases, an "assertive" faculty exploited the power vacuum created during a transition period (the "lame duck" year of a long-term incumbent or a period of interim leadership due to the death or illness of the long-term incumbent) to consolidate their position and develop new proposals to be presented to an incoming president upon his or her arrival. In four cases, the changes were really precipitated by a literal faculty revolt, often including preliminary activity to organize a union. In only one of these ten cases did the president (a five year incumbent) not support faculty efforts--and he and the faculty have been living in a precarious state of tension ever since. Indeed, the president, usually a new incoming president, provided a major source of support for strenghtening the faculty role in fourteen of these sixteen institutions--even in the absence of a strong faculty initiative. The role of the president, in nine out of fourteen cases undertaken within the first year of their arrival, was not so much one of proposing specific changes as in initiating a review of then current governance structures and practices. In nine of the fourteen cases, the faculty may be viewed, in a sense, as actually "forcing the new president's hand" via their own organizational activity and pressure. On at least three campuses, (all church owned or affiliated) however, it was an incoming president who forced the faculty's hand--challenging a wary or reluctant group to assume a greater role in charting institutional directions.

What explains this new found relative faculty assertiveness and relative presidential accommodation? For the most part, the explanation appears to reside in a rapidly changing faculty character. Nearly all of these institutions

were experiencing considerable enrollment growth during the mid and late 1960s. In response to this expansion, together with a fortuitous peak in retirements, these institutions were led to record levels of new hiring between 1965-1970; and the vast majority of these new hires were young, research oriented Ph.D. or Ph.D. candidates (1) who had taken their graduate work at the major research universities during the turmoil of the mid and late 1960s and (2) who were more likely to have spent their undergraduate years at a "university college" or State institution than at a small, free standing liberal arts college. Indeed, in a five or six year period, many of these institutions experienced a turnover in their faculties on the order of 50 percent or more (that is, half the faculty in 1970 or 1971 had not been at the institution in 1965). This rapid expansion, turnover, and change in faculty character (more professional, research oriented) over so short a period had several critical consequences:

1. The increased size and rapid turnover and diversification of the faculty rendered the full faculty meeting unmanageable both as a function purely of the size of the group, but also as a function of the decrease in consensus on values and goals attributable primarily to new hires; hence the virtual necessity of new and representative governance structures;
2. The growth of departments (doubling or tripling in size in a 5-10 year period and attaining the "critical mass" requisite to departmental "self-consciousness") together with the disciplinary orientation of the large contingent of new hires greatly increased faculty orientation to their departments and tended to split the faculty along department lines, thus further reinforcing the decrease of consensus and the need for new kinds of governance structures;

3. The extremely rapid turnover of faculty in so short a period allowed the contingent of new hires to overwhelm organizational socialization mechanisms and rather to press on the organization adoption of their own professional norms developed during their graduate education, including the norms of faculty "professional authority."

It was largely within the context of this developing "academic revolution" at the four year liberal arts college that faculty pressed and presidents accommodated to (primarily new presidents and primarily via selection or self selection) demands for a strengthened/expanded faculty role. It should be noted, however, that in the case of a few institutions, a major impetus for change, especially in the area of personnel policies came from the pressures of regional accreditation visiting teams. In only one case was such pressure, however, decisive; in the others; it seemed rather to constitute external validation of an internal claim already being advanced.

To what extent do the common experiences of these sixteen institutions which saw an expansion of faculty influence mark them off from the minority of our sample institutions at which faculty influence either remained unchanged (N=4) or appeared to diminish (N=1). Not much--indeed all the "minority" institutions that experienced no increment or an actual decrement in faculty influence were similarly touched by the "academic revolution." What explains, then, their divergence from the majority trend? Among the four institutions that experienced no change in the faculty role, three already boasted very strong faculties, accommodating, if somewhat paternalistic, presidents, and indeed were probably the only "faculty driven" institutions in 1969 among our sample. The concerns of their faculty were simply maintaining prerogatives that had already been won. At the remaining "no change" institution, a contingent of faculty did indeed stage something of a revolt lead by the academic

dean. In that church-owned institution, however, the dean was summarily fired by the president (proportedly because he had failed to sign his contract for the following year) and faculty malcontents staged a mass exodus to found their "Harvard of the mid-west" somewhere else.

In the case of the single institution that experienced a perceptible weakening of the faculty role, it appears that the impact of the very vocal contingent of new faculty hires in the late 1960s was largely neutralized by the resistence of a senior faculty oligarchy accustomed to being in charge. While among the more influential faculties in the sample during the 1960s, the maintenance of that influence level in the face of financial difficulties was mitigated by inter-generational faculty conflicts. Thus, by the end of the decade of the 1970s, a revision of college personnel policies was undertaken by the central administration and implemented without formal faculty involvement--and without a faculty vote.

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of this analysis suggest that in a period of intense environmental pressure and of rapid professionalization of college administration, the role of faculty in the governance of liberal arts colleges has nonetheless been for the most part strengthened, especially in the areas of budget preparation and personnel policies. That strengthened role seems to be attributable to the rapid infusion over a very short time period (1965-1970) of a group of young, highly professionalized faculty--an infusion so rapid and large that it appeared to overwhelm the campuses' capability of socializing new recruits into the dominant culture. Rather, it appears that the "culture of orientation" (Van Maanen, 1983) of the large cohort of new recruits replaced as it were the "culture" of the organization of destination. The single case among our sample in which faculty influence appeared to decrease was indeed a situation where

the importation of the new recruit's culture of orientation was actively resisted by the senior faculty. In this sense, the strengthened faculty role may be viewed as an organizational adaptation to an environmental jolt (and indeed at most institutions, it appeared that the central administration was simply accommodating to the inevitable either via selection of a new president or via "change of heart" of the incumbent president). Furthermore it should be noted that the strengthened role was on the part of the faculty as an organized body, and not experienced as such by individual faculty, particularly senior faculty, owing to the transition away from governance by the full faculty meeting toward governance by representative bodies of faculty, or faculty together with other campus constituencies. At least some part of the decline in faculty influence reported in those studies based on the perceptions of individual faculty may thus reflect this increasing sense of relative loss of individual influence--quite independent of the collective influence dimension.

Most broadly, the results suggest that the faculty role and any change therein correspond closely with the level of faculty professionalization and any sudden change therein--even in the face of intense environmental pressure and rapid professionalization of the central administration. In one sense, this merely resoundingly confirms the generally postulated relationship between level of faculty expertise and their role in institutional governance. It further suggests, however, the extraordinary sensitivity of the governance role to extreme changes in the level of faculty expertise/professionalization--even in the face of countervailing pressures toward professionalization and centralization of campus administration. This would appear to suggest that the prevailing view of the ever diminishing faculty role may indeed be true of those institutional sectors that are not experiencing any rapid shifts in level of faculty professionalization, such as, the research universities and the

elite liberal arts colleges. If indeed the developments we have chronicled are not peculiar to liberal arts colleges, but to institutions undergoing rapid shifts in faculty professionalization, then one would expect to begin seeing similar patterns of faculty pressure in those institutional sectors that like the liberal arts colleges, especially the less selective ones, are undergoing shifts upward in the levels of faculty professionalization--e.g, public comprehensive colleges, and regional universities, public and private. Given the relative dearth of current hiring, a very sudden shift is unlikely. However, over the next decade we might expect a certain critical mass to be attained--sufficient to initiate the sorts of pressures that developed in a more concentrated fashion a decade or a decade and half ago at liberal arts colleges. All of this suggests that changes in the level of faculty professionalization among institutional types needs to be taken into account in drawing generalization in the faculty role in governance; and while that role may be diminishing in one major sector--the research university--it may indeed be strengthening itself, or about to--relatively, speaking and at the collective rather than the individual level--in other sectors where the weak academic job market is allowing a gradual infusion of more highly professionalized faculty.

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